

(THE BOYS *present the other GIRLS with a white balloon each.*)

BOY 1

A MILLION LOVE SONGS LATER
HERE I AM

(*SAID IT ALL – Underscore. EXTERIOR OF CHURCH.*)

YOUNG CLAIRE Are we doin' this?

(*The GIRLS each have a pen to write a message on the tag attached to the balloon's string.*)

YOUNG HEATHER What're we s'posed write?

YOUNG ZOE Anything. Something you wanna say to Deb.

(*They all have a go at thinking what to write.*)

YOUNG RACHEL What we didn't realise . . . the nettles weren't just in the songs. When y've grown up with someone who's suddenly not there anymore, every direction you walk there's nettles.

YOUNG HEATHER (*Stops, quietly.*) Why are we doin' this.

YOUNG CLAIRE T' let 'em go on the rocks.

YOUNG HEATHER (*Looking at her card.*) At all? These balloons?

YOUNG ZOE Were you not just listenin' in church? It's what Rach and Deb did when / they were –

YOUNG HEATHER It's not what I did. With Deb. (*Re. CLAIRE.*) Not what SHE did.

YOUNG CLAIRE I don't mind doin' it. Let's / just –

YOUNG ZOE You don't have to write anything clever.

YOUNG HEATHER Yeah I know I don't – It's not about that, Zo. I know we're not all as good with words / as you.

YOUNG ZOE I wasn't saying it like / that –

- YOUNG HEATHER We're not all going to university.
- YOUNG ZOE (s.v.) Oh sod off, Heather.
- YOUNG CLAIRE Let's just go up to / the –
- YOUNG HEATHER I don't wanna go up the rocks! Why would any of us, out of anyone on this PLANET right now / want –
- YOUNG ZOE Because / it's –
- YOUNG HEATHER – I mean am I the only one seeing this?
- YOUNG ZOE BECAUSE IT'S THE LAST PLACE WE WENT WITH DEB!
- YOUNG HEATHER PRECISELY! AN' IF WE HADN'T TAKEN THAT SHORT CUT IN THE FIRST PLACE . . .
- (She emergency stops. Pause underscore. ZOE suddenly goes more steely than we've ever seen her.)*
- YOUNG ZOE It wasn't me who got us kicked off the bus.
- YOUNG RACHEL (s.v.) Louder, boys.
- BOY 1
TAKE ME BACK, TAKE ME BACK
TO WHERE I USED TO BE
- YOUNG HEATHER *(Writes over-quickly.)* There y' go. 'SORRY DEB'. *(Shows the others the card.)* You wanna send that up? 'Cause I tell y' WHAT . . .
- (She pops the balloon with the pen and throws it down and walks to her door.)*
- (To CLAIRE.)* Don't let her force y'.
- YOUNG ZOE I'm not 'forcin' anyone!
- YOUNG CLAIRE It's fine, / we can just –
- YOUNG HEATHER I don't think it is 'fine' actually, Claire. I think it's absolutely not 'fine'.

(HEATHER *slams through her door.*)

YOUNG RACHEL Louder boys . . .

BOY 1
AND HIDE AWAY FROM ALL MY TRUTH
THROUGH THE LIGHT I SEE . . .

OTHER BOYS
AAH . . .
AAH . . .

YOUNG ZOE HEY, HEATHER? WE CAN ALL BE DRAMATIC! (*Turns.*) Let's do the 'Heather', girls! (*Mimcs.*) 'OH MY GOD, I POPPED MY BALLOON EVERYONE!?' (*Y. ZOE pops hers in mimicry.*) 'LOOK AT ME! Ta-da!'

(. . . *Holds the beat, feeling foolish for doing it, and heads off through her door into her own world. CLAIRE goes to pick the deflated balloons off the floors, and in doing so, hers bursts. It shocks her.*)

YOUNG CLAIRE I didn't mean to pop mine. It just –

(*She dries. And goes off through her door into her own room and life. We are left with YOUNG RACHEL on her own.*)

BOY 1
A MILLION LOVE SONGS LATER

YOUNG RACHEL (*To us.*) Soon after that, the plate-smashing at our house turned into a divorce.

BOY 1
A MILLION LOVE SONGS LATER

YOUNG RACHEL Mum took me as far away from Dad as she could find on a map. Which is why . . .

BOY 1
A MILLION LOVE SONGS LATER

OTHER BOYS
AAH . . .

(YOUNG RACHEL *exits and is in walks her OLDER SELF with her Addis washing basket.*)

(ADULT) RACHEL Here I am.